



STATE OF WASHINGTON

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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Conservation District Boards of Supervisors

FROM: Lynn Brown, Chair & Vim Wright, Vice-Chair A

Water Conservation Funding

We want to update you on timely legislative activity related to water and the drought in Washington State. This update refers to activity unrelated to the Clean Water Initiative. You received some information about that effort from WACD in a separate mailing.

The Governor's water bill (HB 1832-s) is making its way through the legislature. It passed the House on Wednesday. Environmental groups are watching its progress with keen interest.

One group, the Center for Environmental Law & Policy (CELP), is working with several legislators to include a funding package with the water bill. The funding proposal totals about \$32 million/year and nearly half that, \$15 million/year, is earmarked for the Conservation Commission. The remaining funds are directed toward the Departments of Ecology and Fish & Wildlife for fish screens, stream gages, water meters, and environmental compliance activities.

If the funding passes, the Conservation Commission will distribute the funds to conservation districts to make water use efficiency improvements. Common technical assistance and cost share might include irrigation system conversions, irrigation water management (IWM), piping of open canals, etc. Some of the water saved from these improvements is slated to be put into trust rights to stay instream for environmental benefits.

As a response to drought related activities, the Conservation Commission has assembled a package of \$75 million worth of water conservation improvements needed over the next ten years to support irrigated agriculture in key areas around the state. CELP hopes that conservation districts will "think outside the box" and consider providing technical support and cost share for improvements beyond traditional IWM approaches. Things like innovative cropping systems that both conserve water and bring a higher level of economic return to the farmer might address several problems at once.

This proposal would provide significant funding to conservation districts and private landowners. It appears to signal an interest by the environmental community to support incentive-based, voluntary conservation programs for agriculture.

We are writing this letter to provide you with information about the proposal and you may use it however you see fit. Please contact Vim Wright for additional details.

cc: Commission Members
Commission Staff
WACD Officers & Directors

